

FWP COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: June 14, 2012

Agenda Item: Bailey Reservoir Fishing Access Site (Region 6)

Division: Fisheries

Action Needed: X Approval of Final Rule/Action

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 10 minutes

Background

This proposed Fishing Access Site (FAS) is a reservoir located approximately 25 miles southwest of Havre. The late Howard Bailey built this 70 surface acre reservoir in 1974, for the purpose of providing fisheries, waterfowl habitat, and public recreational opportunities. Unlike most impoundments in the Region, Bailey Reservoir was not built for irrigation purposes and therefore maintains relatively stable reservoir water levels.

Bailey Reservoir has provided a quality, family friendly recreational option for many years stemming from a “hand shake” agreement between Mr. Bailey and FWP. Based on the historic, current and projected recreational use, this water body would be preserved for future generations. Securing public access to Bailey Reservoir in fee title fits into the R6 and the Department’s goals to establish and maintain high quality fishing opportunities for present and future generations.

The Department is proposing to acquire approximately 55 acres of upland, plus 47 surface acres of reservoir at Bailey Reservoir. In addition, FWP is seeking approval to accept ownership of an adjoining 5-acre parcel to be donated by the Great Falls Chapter of Walleyes Unlimited. The sole purpose of this acquisition is to establish a Fishing Access Site (FAS) on Bailey Reservoir. FWP is also proposing to develop initial improvements if this property is acquired. **Acquisition Funding:** 2009 Legislative FAS Acquisition Account: \$208,000

Public Involvement Process & Results

When this proposal was initially announced to the public in the fall of 2009, 41 letters-of-support were received in a two week period. The Department’s Draft EA was available for public review from April 3- May 4, 2012. During this period FWP received 22 emails and letters. All letters were in support of acquiring the property for the purpose of establishing a Fishing Access Site. On April 17, 2012 a public hearing was held in Havre to discuss this proposal. Twenty one people attended this meeting. All comments and discussion at this meeting were in favor of the acquisition and the proposed development.

Alternatives and Analysis

Proposed Action: FWP will purchase Bailey Reservoir land from Rick & Jeannie Bailey-Martin to establish the Bailey Reservoir FAS for use by the fishing public.

No Action Alternative: Bailey Reservoir would have no guarantee that public fishing opportunities would continue on this extremely popular reservoir fishery. It would be possible that the land could be sold to land investors and the high level of public use discontinued.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale

FWP recommends approval for acquisition of approximately 102 acres of land on the south portion of Bailey Reservoir. In addition, FWP is seeking approval to accept ownership of an adjoining 5-acre parcel, which the Great Falls Chapter of Walleyes Unlimited is proposing to purchase, with the option to donate to FWP.

Proposed Motion

“I move that the Commission authorize the Department to acquire the Bailey Reservoir Fishing Access Site.”